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ABSTRACT

This guide is a planning tool for establishing Head Start-Parent Teacher Association (PTA) partnerships, building effective transition practices from preschool to kindergarten, and promoting continuity in parent and family involvement. Designed for use by coordinators of early childhood, parent involvement, and outreach activities, the guide can be used to facilitate planning meetings to promote Head Start partnerships with the PTA or elementary schools, to assist in developing joint transition activities, and to enhance planning efforts when designing parent and family programs and services. The guide includes "how-to" tips; best practices identified from Continuity for Success pilot sites in New York, North Carolina, and Texas; lessons learned throughout the partnership between Head Start and the PTA, current research findings on child and family transitions from preschool to kindergarten, and tools developed through National PTA and other sources. The guide is organized into four parts: (1) "Continuity for Success: A Partnership Between National PTA and the National Head Start Association"; (2) "How to Establish Partnerships"; (3) "Building Effective Transitions"; and (4) "Measuring Increases in Parent Involvement." Forms such as activities checklists and evaluation tools are appended. (KB)

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Continuity for Success

Transition Planning Guide

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Continuity for Success
TRANSITION PLANNING GUIDE

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Continuity for Success
TRANSITION PLANNING GUIDE

Introduction

Children experience several major transitions during their development and education: from leaving the home environment and entering into an infant-toddler or preschool program, transitioning from a preschool program into elementary school, from elementary school into junior high school, and finally moving from there into high school. Perhaps the most critical of these transitions for children is the one from a preschool program to elementary school. During this period, behavior is shaped and attitudes are formed that will influence children throughout their education.

This transition planning guide is the result of National PTA and the National Head Start Association's (NHSA) Continuity for Success partnership project. It is designed to be a tool for developing a partnership that helps children and families make the transition from Head Start or other preschool programs to elementary school. The guide offers valuable "how to" tips for preschool, Head Start, and elementary school faculty and staff and PTA leaders to establish Head Start-elementary school-PTA partnerships. The guide defines structure, roles, responsibilities, training and development, planning, and evaluation based on the Continuity for Success model. The suggestions in this guide include lessons learned from National PTA/NHSA pilot projects in New York, North Carolina, and Texas.

Continuity for Success: A Partnership Between National PTA and the National Head Start Association

Partnership overview

Continuity for Success—a partnership between National PTA and the National Head Start Association (NHSA)—was launched in the spring of 1995 to form relationships among local Head Starts, PTAs, and public elementary schools. Both National PTA and NHSA place strong emphasis on parent and family involvement and highly value early childhood education. These partnerships help children and families bridge the gap between learning environments and create opportunities for parents and other caregivers to become more involved in their children's education. Teachers and school administrators can benefit from the partnerships as well, because greater parent involvement has been shown to increase student achievement and help children adjust better to new learning environments.

The project was partially supported by a 1995 grant from the Prudential Foundation. Three pilot demonstration sites then were established in Rochester, New York; El Paso, Texas; and Goldsboro, North Carolina. Many innovative transition activities were developed that allowed the pilot sites to achieve the Continuity for Success Goals. The goals are the following:

- Foster the continued, strong involvement of Head Start parents and families into public elementary schools.
- Encourage elementary schools to create parent friendly environments to attract parents to the schools.
- Develop strategies that lessen the barriers to parent and family involvement.
- Create strong local partnerships among Head Start programs, PTAs, and elementary schools.

Project highlights

Continuity for Success has experienced many positive highlights during its four-year history. These highlights provide a good indication of what can be achieved when Head Start groups and PTAs partner together.

Grant funding—Funds to start the partnership came from a $125,000 Prudential Foundation grant and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Local site teams—Site teams or local advisory teams were formed in New York, Texas, and North Carolina. The teams typically included staff from Head Start and the corresponding elementary schools, PTA leaders, parents, and representatives from community service organizations.

Relationships—Partners at all levels—national, state, and local—created new and better ways of working together. The sites reported successes such as reduced stereotyping, increased mutual respect, enhanced communication, expanded collaboration, and improved relationships with school districts.

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Partnership training—National PTA and NHSA held training in diversity, inclusiveness, and relationship building techniques for the Continuity for Success local site teams. The training helped both associations recognize similarities, respect differences, acknowledge strengths and weaknesses, and explore the mutual benefits to partnering.

Brochures—The national partnership created two brochures—*Continuity for Success: A Partnership Between the National PTA* and *the National Head Start Association* and *Making the Transition: From Early Childhood Programs into Elementary Schools.* Both are available on National PTA and NHSA's websites at www.pta.org and www.nhsa.org.

Publicity—The project has attracted publicity and received recognition in several education publications, such as *Education Week* and the *Elementary School Journal*, as well as in local newspapers and magazines.

Project evaluation and summary report—North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) completed an evaluation of Continuity for Success. The evaluation's results were included in the *Partnership Summary Report*, which is a compilation of site transition practices, lessons learned, recommendations, and next steps. The report is posted on National PTA's website at www.pta.org.

How to Establish Partnerships

Identifying partners and liaisons

The strength of a Continuity for Success project is based on its partners and the liaisons to their organizations. The first step in forming a partnership is identifying prospects for these roles. In this process, try to maintain a balance of public, private, and community representatives to help ensure that all areas of the community are represented and working toward a common goal. These representatives may include, but are not limited to, early childhood service providers, parents and families, teachers, administrators, PTA leaders, family and health service providers, and business/community members.

It is important that all partners devote the necessary time to implement the project, although, it is not uncommon for a partner to assign another person to take his or her place. When changes occur, provide appropriate orientation for new participants.

Characteristics of successful partnerships

A partnership may be defined as an ongoing working relationship between two or more organizations or individuals in order to meet common goals and objectives. Building positive working relationships is a top priority for success. The following elements are important in this process:

- active listening
- ample time
- caring, positive attitude
- commitment
- flexibility
- inclusiveness
- mutual respect
- honest and open communication
- sensitivity to cultural and other differences
- shared leadership and decision making
- trust

Successful partnerships often have these following traits in common:

- Time dedicated to learning more about each other's organization, operations, leadership, culture, similarities, and differences
- Agreement and commitment to partnership goals and objectives
- Clearly defined roles for all leadership levels
- Ongoing exchange of information, skills, and resources
- Acknowledgment of potential barriers and commitment to finding creative ways to overcome them

Forming and sustaining a partnership project

To form and sustain a local Continuity for Success partnership, the early childhood education leaders involved in the process should keep in mind the following nine steps:

1. Start communicating
2. Build an advisory team
3. Create a common vision and mission
4. Conduct a transition assessment of current early childhood education activities
5. Include parents in the planning process
6. Conduct focus group meetings
7. Develop an action plan
8. Ensure successful implementation
9. Develop an evaluation process

1. Start communicating

Find out where local Head Start programs, elementary schools, and PTAs in the school district are located. Explore their history, philosophy, mission, focus, and programs.

Start the process by talking with others concerned about goals and interests regarding early childhood education.

Arrange a series of meetings with a few other community members also interested in early childhood education. The person arranging the meeting should develop a well-prepared agenda that leads to meaningful discussion. The first meeting should consist of a discussion on the benefits of Continuity for Success to the community. Meetings that follow might include agenda items such as gaps in services, potential resources, and mutual benefits.

2. Build an advisory team

Identify members of local Head Start programs, elementary school PTAs, and administrators, such as the principal, or teachers who have expressed a commitment to partnering. Form an advisory team that consists of no more than 10 members.

- Send letters signed by Head Start and PTA representatives or make phone calls inviting organizations to participate on the team.
- Make an effort to include the following on your advisory team:
  - Elementary school principal
  - Teacher from one of the corresponding schools
  - Parent
  - PTA volunteer
  - Head Start director
  - Disability specialist
  - Health coordinator
  - Head Start transition coordinator or parent involvement coordinator
  - Representatives from other programs serving children and families

Bring a facilitator in to the first advisory team meeting to help the team establish a vision, goals, and outcomes for Continuity for Success. Facilitators can be expensive, so try to find someone to volunteer facilitator services. For example, an advisory team member or a personal contact of a team member could be the facilitator if that person has the proper skills and experience.

Use the advisory team's resources and expertise. Team members' resources may include meeting facilities, printing equipment, and materials and volunteers for mailings to parents/families. Their expertise can include education, experience, and leadership.

Draft a partnership agreement that defines the role of each partner, once all interested parties have agreed to join the Continuity for Success partnership. (See "Creating a Partnership Agreement," on page 9 and Form E: Sample Partnership Agreement, on page 19.)

Spend time developing camaraderie and cohesiveness among members of the local advisory team by creating opportunities for networking and social events. This is essential to the success of the partnership.

3. Create a common vision and mission

A *vision statement* is an ideal image of what a Head Start-elementary school-PTA partnership can and should become in an area or school district. For instance, the vision statement could read, "Continuity for Success will become an effective program for developing Head Start-PTA partnerships and promoting continuity in parent involvement within the local school district."

A *mission statement* is more specific and should define what Head Start and PTA intend to accomplish together and for whom. A sample mission statement might read, "Together, through Continuity for Success, National PTA and Head Start will strive to create collaborative education opportunities and foster the continued, strong involvement of Head Start parents and families in transitioning children from Head Start to public school."

In developing a common mission, leaders need to understand the culture of the participating organizations and value input and feedback from others.

4. Conduct a transition assessment

Assess current transition activities and address existing barriers to successful transitions. Examples of current transition activities might include the following:

- joint training for Head Start and public school administrators
- Head Start and kindergarten teacher visitations
- family field trips to corresponding elementary schools

Examples of barriers to successful transitions might include the following:

- lack of parent and family involvement
- poor coordination between the Head Start program and the elementary school
- children who do not adapt well to new situations

Include the following in the transition assessment:

- investigation of current efforts made by the state, county, or local school district to ensure that there is no duplication and to determine how the partnership can build upon these efforts
- examination of transition practices across programs, current practices, needs, shared goals and outcomes, interest level, and resources available

Use the information gathered from the transition assessment to develop the goals and activities for the Continuity for Success project.

5. Include parents in the planning process

In planning for effective transitions, parents should be involved in the process to ensure that their needs and concerns are addressed. Some areas where parent and family input and feedback will be crucial to the planning process are as follows:

- focus groups
- advisory team
- partnership meetings
- transition team
- PTA meetings

In attempting to reach parents to engage in planning and other activities, accept and acknowledge that establishing and maintaining contact can be difficult and time-consuming. It is important that those trying to connect with parents realize the need for flexibility.

- Although most schools use newsletters and other printed materials to pass on to parents via their children, it is not the most effective means of communication. Explore all possible communication methods to ensure that parents know about homework, events, and school policies.
- Initiate contact by sending a letter, followed by a phone call, inviting parents to meet before the school year starts. Meeting times should be flexible for working parents, such as mornings or evenings.
- If it is not convenient for some parents to meet at school because of transportation problems, try to schedule a home visit. You may have to meet with them on the weekend or in a nontraditional setting such as a library or community center.
- The advisory team may identify a parent or a school faculty member or staff person who can try various outreach strategies.

6. Conduct focus group meetings

Focus groups can help better determine parents' understanding of what is involved in the transition process and what information and services will be necessary to increase their knowledge and active participation in this area.

Plan one or more focus group meetings with parents, teachers, students, and administrators while children are still in Head Start.

Talk about the following at the focus group meeting(s):

- identifying strengths and barriers to increasing parent involvement
- basic family needs
- additional teacher support needs
- transition policies and procedures
- training needs

Conduct a survey during the meeting to determine parents' current level of involvement and how they expect to be involved in their children's elementary school.

Discuss how parents can become more involved in their children's education at home and in school (see Form A: Parent Involvement Activities Rating Sheet, on page 15, and the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs in the box on page 9 or at www.pta.org), and ask about what activities parents did during the summer to prepare their children for kindergarten. (See Form B: Pre-Kindergarten Activities Checklist, on page 16.)

7. Develop an action plan

The *action plan* is a written document describing short and long-term goals, steps toward implementation, expected outcomes, methods for reviewing progress, budget considerations, and an evaluation process. It should offer an ideal system or structure that supports transition goals.

- Hold a planning meeting with the advisory team to develop an action plan.
- Encourage the participation of state PTA and state NHSA representatives in the first planning meeting with the advisory team to discuss results from the transition assessment and focus group meetings.
- Use the results from the focus group meetings and the transition assessment to develop goals for the action plan, such as a goal that calls for additional teacher training.
- Include the Continuity for Success Goals in the action plan. (See page 13 for goals.) List each goal, the steps needed to reach each goal, the expected outcomes, how they will be evaluated, who is responsible, and a timeline for each goal. (See Form C: Action Plan Outline, on page 17.)
- Determine if parent, staff, and faculty professional development is needed to get the benefits from Continuity for Success.
- Construct a budget and determine if financial or nonfinancial resources will be required to accomplish each goal. Find out from advisory team members what resources they can commit toward reaching each goal.
- Discuss various fund-raising strategies if adequate funds are not available.
- Hold periodic meetings to report on the plan's progress, and update team members with new information or strategies.
- Allow ample time for planning. Make certain all the necessary components are in place before beginning.

8. Ensure successful implementation

The following steps can help get Continuity for Success started in preschools and elementary schools:

- Frequently update and maintain quality information through e-mail, faxes, or regular telephone contact.
- Cultivate relationships among team members. Ensure that there is time to get to know one another socially. Extend invitations to partners for social events or fund-raisers. Schedule a retreat to plan for the upcoming school year and subsequent years.

- Monitor the progress of the plan's implementation. Update action steps as necessary with new information or strategies.
- Create a brochure using Continuity for Success and the team's goals and objectives. List the activities and services available through the partnership and highlight mutual accomplishments in the brochure.
- Generate publicity for the partnership, share information in each other's newsletters, call members of the press and invite them to attend important events, conduct workshops, and set up an exhibit to display materials developed through the partnership at health fairs, orientations, open houses, and other school events. Inform the local school board about Continuity for Success through methods such as making a presentation at one of its meetings.

9. Develop an evaluation process

An evaluation is essential if advisory team members are to know if their efforts to involve Head Start parents in elementary school PTAs have been successful. The advisory team should discuss the best methods for evaluating their progress. The following are a few suggestions to help advisory teams evaluate the project as it progresses:

- Provide sign-in sheets at all of the team's meetings. This will allow the team to keep track of parents who regularly attend and new parents who attend, provide a running count of attendees, and help determine which activities were most popular.
- Prepare periodic reports on each parent and family activity to determine if the meeting's goals were met. This information may be shared with the advisory team or at parent meetings. (See Form D: Transition Activity Evaluation, on page 18.)
- Develop a system to identify Head Start parents who stay involved during elementary school and become involved in PTA. Then designate an elementary school staff member or an advisory team member to identify and keep a count of these parents.

Creating a partnership agreement

Partnership agreements are a great way to express a mutual relationship and commitment in writing. (See Form E: Sample Partnership Agreement, on page 19.) A written agreement also helps identify roles and responsibilities and should include goals and objectives. The agreement's language does not have to be legal in nature because it is not meant to be legally binding. Most partnership agreements are nonfinancial in nature.

The following are a few standard items to include in a partnership agreement:

1. name of the Head Start or elementary school initiating the partnership
2. name of the partnering school or organization
3. date the partnership officially began
4. duration of the agreement
5. nature of the relationship
6. what services each organization provides
7. terms for modification and cancellation of the agreement
8. signatures of appropriate parties in Head Start and PTA

National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs

Standard I: Communicating—Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.

Standard II: Parenting—Parenting skills are promoted and supported.

Standard III: Student Learning—Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.

Standard IV: Volunteering—Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.

Standard V: School Decision Making and Advocacy—Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

Standard VI: Collaborating with Community—Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

Source: *National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs*, National PTA®, reprinted 1998.

Building Effective Transitions

Transition checklist

The following checklist may be useful in assessing and exploring family resources and needs. The advisory team can work to ensure that these areas have been discussed with parents and families.

- ☐ **Health/mental health services**—Work with families to ensure that school physicals, health screenings, and immunizations are up-to-date. Explore access to care issues such as Children's Health Insurance Programs (CHIP) and transportation.
- ☐ **Support services**—Assist in coordinating services children and families want and need, and work to ensure continuity in those services as they make the transition to elementary school.
- ☐ **Racial/ethnic/language barriers**—Explore diversity issues with families. Find out how the corresponding school promotes and encourages social and racial balance. If language is a barrier, find options for bilingual education and translation services.
- ☐ **Education and training**—Find out parents' needs for education and training opportunities in the context of transition, school policies, and options for personal growth.
- ☐ **Communication**—Discuss the importance of regular, two-way, and meaningful communication between parents and educators. Find out which methods are preferable, such as telephone, home visits, mail, and so forth.
- ☐ **Opportunities for parent involvement**—Discuss how parents can be more involved in both the Head Start program and the elementary school. Explain the benefits of joining PTA and encourage participation. Invite them to attend a meeting.
- ☐ **Parent rights and responsibilities**—Inform parents about their basic rights and responsibilities regarding their children's education.
- ☐ **Access to resources**—Provide the family with an up-to-date community resource list. When appropriate, make initial contacts on behalf of the family and assist them in understanding eligibility criteria. Be sure to include information about child care and after-school programs for working parents.
- ☐ **Curriculum and program goals**—Discuss as a team (family, Head Start, and elementary school educators) the elementary school's curriculum and program goals. Explore how to improve curriculum and develop continuity. Discuss individual and special needs and take time to get to know other team members better.
- ☐ **Family strengths and interests**—Identify unique family strengths. Find out family members' interests. Assist in directing them toward building on those strengths and exploring their interests.
- ☐ **Developmental gains**—List and keep track of gains in early childhood development and explain how these gains will be beneficial to the elementary school environment.

Parent and staff professional development

The pilot sites reported that professional development for parents, staff, and faculty throughout the Continuity for Success project is valuable. Workshops, seminars, presentations at state PTA conventions, and classes on policy writing and parent involvement strategies all contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the transition process. Advisory team members who have the expertise may lead these sessions or, if funding is available, consultants may be hired. When all parties involved are prepared to confront the various issues and tasks necessary to a successful transition, the benefits are numerous. Listed below are some topics to include when planning professional development:

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- Instruction on writing policies and procedures concerning…
  - parent involvement
  - developmentally appropriate practices
  - individualized transition plans
  - special needs families
  - record transferal
  - teacher visitation and articulation

- Effective communication skills in order to…
  - convey accurate information about Head Start and PTA
  - create a closer home-school connection
  - enhance leadership and advocacy roles
  - promote awareness of the importance of successful transitions

- Diversity training to address…
  - social and racial balance
  - multiculturalism
  - inclusiveness
  - relationship building

Best practices

The following are successful examples of activities that can help your Continuity for Success project:

Best Practice Ideas for Head Start Faculty

- Arrange field trips to corresponding elementary schools to increase children's familiarity with the elementary school environment.
- Teach children the difference between Head Start and elementary schools, and include children's input and feedback in the transition planning process. Activities to do this can include role playing, reading, making up stories about kindergarten, or simply asking them about their impressions or anxieties regarding the new school.
- Create a better understanding for parents about the benefits of parent involvement through an orientation of Continuity for Success' partnership goals and objectives.
- Offer parents academic enrichment classes for General Educational Development tests, English as a second language, reading, math, computer training, job readiness, nutrition, drug awareness, parenting, and citizenship.
- Enhance the important role fathers and father figures play in young children's development by starting involvement programs for men.
- Include the family in transition planning through training, individual plans, and Continuity for Success activities.
- Invite elementary school teachers to visit and give presentations at Head Start.

Best Practice Ideas for Elementary School Teachers and PTAs

- Ask parents to bring children to the school district orientation. Although children may not fully understand the orientation, parents can help explain the things that are important for them to know.
- Ask Head Start teachers to visit the corresponding elementary schools. The visits can promote the sharing of curriculum information, early childhood strategies, philosophies, and special needs of physically and mentally challenged children.

Best Practice Ideas That Can Be Done Together by Head Start, PTA, and Parents

- Hold training sessions and seminars for parents on issues involving children entering public school to help increase parents' knowledge and skills in a variety of areas. Topics can include the following:
  - team building and leadership skill development
  - parenting and education issues
  - the school district's structure
  - PTA and advocacy roles
  - transition issues

- Encourage parent participation in PTA meetings to give them a chance to meet other parents, share information, and advocate on issues that help improve the school environment.
- Encourage parent attendance at PTA state conventions to expose parents to issues of national scope and expert opinions on education, health, and family living.
- Give parents a stronger voice in determining their children's education through opportunities for input and feedback at parent conferences.

- Organize breakfast events to attract families to the school.
- Hold Family Nights to give families a chance to network and have fun together.
- Promote healthy family values and raise funds for the school with annual events such as carnivals and bike parades.
- Hold health fairs to increase awareness of children's health issues and provide information about free or reduced-cost health care for children.
- Offer presentations focusing on children and family expectations in elementary school to better prepare children and their families for the opportunities and challenges they will encounter.
- Explain the differences to parents between Head Start and kindergarten programs. These differences may include moving from Head Start's child-focused activities to the elementary school's more academic-focused programs and fewer roles for parents at the elementary school than at Head Start.
- Hold a joint training session for Head Start and elementary school teachers about transition goals.

Sharing best practices and ideas in areas of teacher selection, environment, scheduling, and curriculum will make it easier for children and families to make the transition.

These are a few of the many transition practices to help better prepare children for elementary school and increase the involvement of parents and families in the transition planning process.

Characteristics of successful transitions

Successful transitions have a positive long-lasting effect on children's ability to learn and the relationship between home and school for parents. Successful transitions occur when children are well prepared about what to expect and excited about learning and parents are active participants in the education process at home and school.

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Ingredients for Successful Transitions

Good preparation of children, families, and schools for elementary school.

+

Comprehensive support for children, families, and schools in early elementary school.

+

Positive expectations for the future.

↓

Successful transitions throughout schooling

- Children have good feelings about school, teachers, parents, and peers.
- Children show good progress in physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.
- Parents and key adults express positive attitudes toward school and promote children's learning.
- Teachers and school personnel provide programs adapted to children's individual development and cultural/linguistic diversity.
- Mutually supportive relationships occur among families, school personnel, service providers, communities.

↓

Positive school adjustment and successful transitions to adolescence and adulthood

Source: Craig Ramey, University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Measuring Increases in Parent Involvement

This section offers suggestions for collecting data and other strategies to assist in measuring continuity in parent involvement from Head Start to elementary school and into PTA. This information can be helpful in determining the partnership's success.

Continuity for Success Goals

With every Continuity for Success goal, there should be a way to measure increases in parent involvement. The Continuity for Success Goals are listed below and should be included in the action plan. After each goal are ways to measure if partnerships are reaching their goal.

Goal 1: Foster the continued, strong involvement of Head Start parents and families into public elementary schools.

Measuring progress toward this goal will involve using a tracking tool and establishing a method to identify which parents from Head Start become involved at the corresponding school PTA. There must be two-way coordination and communication between Head Start and the elementary school to measure parent involvement. There must be consensus on what constitutes good parent involvement (see National PTA's National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs on page 9 or at www.pta.org.) and the various levels of involvement, such as helping with homework, attending school functions, attending and participating in PTA meetings and school decision making, and advocating. Identify and strengthen a few current strategies that work well for you.

In the blank space contained in the statement below, assign a projection expressed by a percentage to show how much parent involvement can be expected to increase as a result of Continuity for Success intervention.

The number of parents involved in Head Start who continue their involvement into public elementary school will increase by ___ percent.

Fairly conservative estimates of parent involvement range from 20 percent to 25 percent. For example, 10 percent of Head Start parents usually continue their involvement into elementary school. Through Continuity for Success efforts, it is anticipated that an additional 10 percent of parents will become involved.

Goal 2: Encourage elementary schools to create parent friendly environments to attract parents to the schools.

There are several ways to create a more parent friendly environment. Think in terms of providing things *parents* want and need. Many schools are creating parent and family resource centers that include books on parenting, school-related information, computer access, referrals to community services, and classes or workshops. Other activities can include back-to-school fairs, open houses, parent-teacher conferences, sports events, and art and academic exhibitions. Every time a new activity is implemented, determine how many new parents attended.

Goal 3: Develop strategies that lessen the barriers to parent and family involvement.

During the first year of the partnership, make a list of the parent and family involvement barriers. Rank them from the least to the most difficult to remove. Develop specific strategies for each barrier and collect data to determine successes or challenges. Work to remove each barrier and pay careful attention to see that they do not reoccur. Prepare a year-end report describing the effectiveness of each strategy.

Goal 4: Create strong local partnerships among Head Start programs, PTAs, and elementary schools.

Attaining this goal will depend on the partnership's effectiveness. Save documentation such as meeting minutes and periodic progress reports to keep track of project activities, publicity, funds received, distribution of resources, and attendance at other team members' conferences, conventions, and workshops.

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Summary

Continuity for Success offers a model for building Head Start-elementary school-PTA partnerships and establishing effective transition practices. Parents play a key role in successful transitions due to the social, emotional, and academic support they offer to their children at home and in school. Parents also are valuable partners with the school in reaching mutual goals and objectives for children. With successful transitions, children, parents and families, teachers, and administrators all benefit.

Children and families need good preparation and comprehensive support during the transition process to help ensure continuity. Good preparation involves having a plan in place that facilitates smooth transitions through collaboration, communication, and coordination. Education, joint training, getting to know each other, learning to work together, and increasing access to support services all contribute to positive outcomes and work to ensure continuity. Positive outcomes at this level of early childhood development set the stage for how children and parents react to and adapt to other transitions, not only in school, but in other situations as well.

Continuity for Success partnerships work well when partners' time, energy, commitment, and support are dedicated to improving the health, education, safety, and well-being of our nation's most valuable resource—our children. Our nation's future depends on the lessons we teach our children today and how well we prepare them for the world to come.

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Appendix—Form A

Parent Involvement Activities Rating Sheet

This tool is designed to find out how parents feel about the different ways they can be involved in their child's development.

Dear parent,

Please check the box that best expresses for you the level of importance of each involvement activity.

Ways Parents Can Be Involved	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know
Knowing your child's teacher				
Attending programs or field trips at your child's school				
Talking often with your child's teacher				
Volunteering in your child's classroom				
Knowing the principal/director				
Making sure your child has had a good night's sleep before school				
Selecting your child's school				
Making sure your child has eaten breakfast before school				
Helping the teacher with projects				
Working on committees at the school				
Helping your child with school projects				
Reading stories with your child				
Watching TV with your child				
Talking with other parents about your child's school				
Buying educational toys/workbooks for your child				
Visiting your child's school regularly				
Making materials and games for your child's school				
Other important things:				

Pre-Kindergarten Activities Checklist

This tool is designed to suggest what activities parents can do during the summer to help prepare their child for kindergarten. Distribute this list at the beginning of summer.

Dear parent,
Please use this list to guide you in preparing your child for kindergarten.

Pre-Kindergarten Activities

- ☐ Visit the school
- ☐ Invite other children in my child's kindergarten class over to play
- ☐ Talk with my child's kindergarten teacher
- ☐ Read books about kindergarten to my child
- ☐ Talk about school with my child
- ☐ Talk to my child about how he/she will get to school
- ☐ Take my child to the doctor for neccessary shots
- ☐ Buy school supplies
- ☐ Talk with people at Head Start about kindergarten
- ☐ Work with my child on school skills
- ☐ Other important things:

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Appendix—Form C

Transition Action Plan Outline

Goals (What do you want to happen?)	
Action Steps (How will it happen?)	
Benefits (What positive outcome do you expect?)	
Evaluation (How will you know when it is complete?)	
Assigned To (Who will do this?)	
Time Line (When will it be completed?)	
Resources Needed	
Cost	
Additional Community Contacts	

Transition Activity Evaluation

Dear Transition Activity Leader,
Please complete a copy of this form to keep a record of each
transition activity your partnership conducts, e.g., orientation, field trip.

Name of activity:

Brief description of activity:

Dates offered:

Goals of activity:

Were goals met? If yes, explain how. If no, explain why they weren't met.

Place where activity occurred:

How many attended this activity?

Parents_____ Children_____ Staff_____

Did you have participants complete an evaluation of this activity? If yes, what were the results?

Name of person completing form:

Continuity for Success
Sample Partnership Agreement

Use an agreement such as this when your organization forms partnerships among Head Start, elementary schools/PTAs, and other support service providers to create easier transitions and a more effective coordination of services for young children and their families. Also, designate a liaison among the partners to serve as a contact and assist in coordinating the partnership.

This nonfinancial agreement, dated _____, is to form a partnership to support young children and their families as they make the transition from Head Start into public elementary schools.

Continuity for Success, a model transition program nationally recognized throughout the early childhood education community and a partnership between **National PTA** and the **National Head Start Association**, will offer technical assistance and support.

One of the desired outcomes of Continuity for Success is to integrate existing transition programs with Continuity for Success' goals and objectives. Integrating these goals and objectives will create a partnership model that enhances continuity in parent and family involvement from Head Start into elementary school through joint coordination of transition activities at both school environments.

Continuity for Success' goals and objectives are similar in scope and complementary to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Head Start Program Performance Standards and other regulations under subpart C, "Family and Community Partnerships."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Foster the continued, strong involvement of Head Start parents and families into public elementary schools.

Objectives:

- Determine types and levels of parent and family involvement while children are in Head Start.
- Determine how much former Head Start parents are involved in education while their children are in elementary school.
- Increase the levels of involvement so that most parents and families are involved as much in elementary school as they were in Head Start.
- Experiment with a variety of strategies to increase parent and family involvement in the schools.
- Identify three or more specific strategies to implement during the first year.
- Identify and strengthen parent involvement efforts that currently encourage strong participation.

Goal 2: Encourage elementary schools to create parent friendly environments to attract parents and family to the schools.

Objectives:

- Dedicate space within the school to develop a parent resource center or other such meeting space where parents can come to read, study, use a computer (or other useful equipment), hold workshops or classes, or find out about community resources.
- Design fun and interactive recreational activities at school that parents, students, and teachers can do together, such as art, music or drama projects, health fairs, or sports programs.
- Encourage parents to be involved at the school by being a teacher, supporter, advocate, decision maker, or classroom volunteer.
- Ask professionals in the community who are willing to volunteer at least once or twice a week to offer services parents want, such as legal advocacy, welfare issues, job readiness, or parent mediation.
- Designate a staff person, advisory team member, or volunteer to do outreach that includes one-on-one contact with one or both parents. This can be established either through home visits or school appointments.

Continuity for Success Sample Partnership Agreement, continued

- Make a special effort to engage fathers and father figures to reinforce the message that positive male role models exert a significant influence on children's growth and development.

Goal 3: Develop strategies that reduce or eliminate barriers to parent and family involvement.

Objectives:

- Identify as many barriers to parent and family involvement as possible during the first year of the project and rank them in terms of least to most difficult to remove.
- Identify as many existing parent involvement strengths as possible and rank them in terms of which ones could be further developed.
- Develop specific intervention strategies for eliminating each barrier and collect data to determine the level of success or failure.
- Systematically remove these barriers, keeping careful watch (data) on those removed so that they do not reappear.
- Prepare a report after the program's second year describing specific strategies and their effectiveness in achieving the desired results. This report can be used by other Head Start programs, schools, and PTAs to help them with their Continuity for Success program.

Goal 4: Create strong local partnerships among Head Start programs, PTAs, and elementary schools.

Objectives:

- Enhance marketing efforts for Head Start and PTA members to become progressively more aware of the Continuity for Success partnership.
- Strengthen efforts at the PTA elementary schools to build and expand partnerships and at Head Start programs to integrate Continuity for Success into their current transition program.
- Partner with universities and other research-based centers to create and strengthen evaluation tools to measure progress in meeting transition program goals and objectives.
- Increase information-sharing and dissemination activities among PTAs, Head Start programs, and other partners.
- Expand the partnership to new sites as opportunities arise.

Assurances

Add a section here for services that the Continuity for Success partners commit to providing for the program.

Any partner who signed below may change this agreement if the other partnership members agree upon it. This agreement also can be canceled within 30 days of when this agreement was signed if written notice is given.

We agree to become partners in order to support and increase parent and family involvement during the transition from Head Start into elementary school.

_____
Head Start director

_____
Receiving public elementary school principal

_____
PTA representative

_____
Service provider

_____

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Partnership Rating Tool

The partnership rating tool is designed to rate the similarity of your partnership against various sets of practices in the following areas:

- Partnership agreements
- Communication exchange
- Management support
- Parent/family support
- Financial management
- Evaluation system

The tool has a rating scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being "not similar" to 4 being "very similar." Circle the number that best describes how similar your partnership is to the stated practices.

From: *Criteria for Determining Promising Practices*, National Head Start Association

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	Rate how similar your partnership is with these stated practices			
	not similar	somewhat similar	similar	very similar
AGREEMENT				
1. There is a formal/written partnership agreement that outlines the goals, measurable objectives, responsibilities, guidelines, and strategies of the partnership that will be used to reach its mission.	1	2	3	4
2. There is a written mission statement that is easily understood and can be articulated by staff and parents to guide the agency's program operations.	1	2	3	4
3. The partnership agreement was written with input from all partners (Head Start staff, elementary school/PTA representative, parents, service providers).	1	2	3	4
4. The partnership agreement presents strategies designed to meet the needs of diverse families within the community.	1	2	3	4
COMMUNICATION				
1. There is an ongoing exchange of information and skills among partnering organizations. The partnership has an outreach plan to help the community become involved.	1	2	3	4
2. All project staff have access to other partners' agency information in order to learn about their partners' programs and services.	1	2	3	4
3. Program practices focus on interdependencies among partners to provide such aid as offering more flexible hours of services, managing multiple funding sources, and ability to meet a wide range of children and family needs.	1	2	3	4
4. Partners share new information to become better advocates for each other.	1	2	3	4

Partnership Rating Tool, continued

	Rate how similar your partnership is with these stated practices			
MANAGEMENT	**not similar**	**somewhat similar**	**similar**	**very similar**
1. There is a documented system in place that optimizes decision making capability for administration, staff, and parents.	1	2	3	4
2. There is a consensus building structure for getting ideas and opinions from key stakeholders.	1	2	3	4
3. Top management support is evident to all participants and others outside the project.	1	2	3	4
4. There are regular face-to-face meetings involving key stakeholders.	1	2	3	4
PARENT/FAMILY SUPPORT				
1. Families/parents are valued partners. The relationship is built on trust, respect, peer support, open communication, honest active listening, flexibility, caring, information sharing, and support.	1	2	3	4
2. The partnership is aware of culturally sensitive practices and is more direct in working with families from diverse ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds.	1	2	3	4
3. Parent involvement is encouraged and promoted. Different levels of parent involvement include school decision making and advocacy, collaborating with the community, volunteering, assisting with student learning, parenting skill development, and effective home-school communication (based on National PTA's National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs).	1	2	3	4
4. The partnership activities are designed to be welcoming to men and other family members who don't usually get involved.	1	2	3	4

From: *Criteria for Determining Promising Practices*, National Head Start Association

Partnership Rating Tool, continued

FINANCE

	Rate how similar your partnership is with these stated practices			
	not similar	somewhat similar	similar	very similar
1. There is a documented system in place that provides for timely budget development, tracking, reporting, monitoring, modifying, and forecasting to benefit all partners.	1	2	3	4
2. Partners share funding responsibilities and contribute dollars and in-kind resources such as meeting space, personnel, training, and waivers.	1	2	3	4
3. Community resources outside of Head Start funds are sought in order to support partnership efforts.	1	2	3	4
4. There is a strategy for self-sustaining a particular project when the funding cycle has ended. Services coordinated through the project are integrated into the day-to-day ongoing Head Start services.	1	2	3	4

EVALUATION

1. There is a monitoring system in place that provides immediate feedback from the stakeholders on the partnership's development.	1	2	3	4
2. There is a clearly stated evaluation plan to measure changes in the system and how they impact children and families.	1	2	3	4
3. Data are collected and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the evaluation tools. Additionally, the monitoring and evaluation process is established on baseline data which are used to analyze progress toward measurable objectives.	1	2	3	4
4. The decision to further expand collaborative services to children and families is based on evaluation results.	1	2	3	4

From: *Criteria for Determining Promising Practices*, National Head Start Association

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To download a copy of the *Continuity for Success* guide, visit National PTA's website, or to order a copy, call NHSA at (800) 687-5044.

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